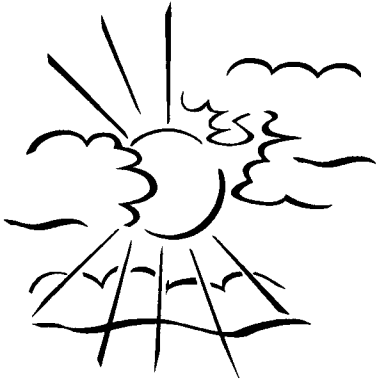


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*Important story at this spot

Articles in Today's Clips

Monday, May 1, 2006

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Wayne County

911 calls are of little help; baby is slain

Detroit neighbors reported trouble

April 29, 2006

BY AMBER HUNT and BEN SCHMITT

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITERS

Residents of an east-side Detroit neighborhood said Friday they called 911 in vain for hours, hoping police would come to investigate an uproar that ended with a man later being arrested on suspicion of butchering his 9-month-old son.

Police said they found 22-year-old Raphael Thomas at 2:42 a.m. Friday, bloody, naked and stabbing himself with a knife as he walked down Gratiot after killing his son and dumping the child's body in the backyard of a nearby home.

Thomas told police that he killed his son, Raphael Thomas Jr., to free him from the evils of the world, officers said.

Authorities said Friday that they are investigating how the calls were handled. The incident marks at least the second investigation police have launched into 911 calls this month.

Paris Canty, who lives across the street from the Thomas home in the 8900 block of Milner, said the killing might have been avoided if police had taken neighbors' initial 911 calls more seriously.

"If the first call would have been responded to, maybe none of this would have happened," Canty said.

Detroit Police spokesman James Tate acknowledged that 911 dispatchers received at least four calls about the incident. Police didn't respond to the first 911 call because the report was of illegal dumping -- not a high priority for a city that has to deal with multiple shootings and other violent crimes on any given night, Tate said.

In early April, police promised to investigate the emergency dispatch line after news reports surfaced about a February case in which then-5-year-old Robert Turner's calls about his ailing mother were dismissed as pranks.

His mother, 46-year-old Sherrill Turner, died of complications from an enlarged heart.

Southfield attorney Geoffrey Fieger filed a lawsuit in that case, and brought to light another incident in which dispatchers didn't believe a woman who called to report she'd been shot in the head. That woman, Lorraine Hayes, told dispatchers she was dying. She's now a paraplegic.

Detroit Police Chief Ella Bully-Cummings refused to answer questions Friday about young Raphael's death.

Canty, 37, said his wife called 911 about 10:40 p.m. Thursday when the couple heard screaming and saw a man throwing furniture across his front and side lawns.

Canty also called a neighbor and asked her to call 911, hoping police would respond faster if more residents spoke up. Canty called again at about midnight, he said, because the tirade hadn't stopped.

Tate said police did respond to a 1 a.m. 911 call about vehicles along Milner being spray-painted with Biblical verses.

Tate said police knocked on the door where Raphael Thomas lives with a woman and their infant son, but no one responded.

"We have disturbances all day long," Tate said. "When you're talking about priority runs, that goes to the calls that are in the process of being violent."

"There was no indication that anyone was harmed or that there was even a threat of anyone being harmed" in the Thomas case, he said.

Because officers can't handle the volume of calls, 911 dispatchers prioritize calls by severity, Tate said. No one reported an assault or said the man had a weapon, so the call was not treated as a high priority.

Tate also said Friday's stabbing doesn't parallel the other 911 complaints because, in this case, neither police nor neighbors suspected the situation would turn deadly.

Canty said that's little consolation.

"Any time there's a disturbance or dispute in the neighborhood, I think someone should come out and take a look at it," said Canty, who lives with his wife and four children.

Canty said that he and his wife, Wanda Canty, at first thought his neighbor was "dumping" -- or tossing out his belongings because he was being evicted. That's what Wanda Canty told the 911 dispatcher, he said.

About midnight, he said, he still heard a commotion. He called 911 again, he said, and told the dispatcher that officers needed to investigate.

He learned from a neighbor about the stabbing Friday morning.

"It just brought tears to our eyes," said Paris Canty, whose youngest child is 6 months old. "It was very disturbing; 911 is supposed to be help for us, for the community all around. ... Nothing got done and this is the end result."

Canty said he'd seen the elder Raphael Thomas before, but didn't know him. The family didn't appear to have other children, he said, and had moved into the Milner duplex about seven months ago.

He said the 911 dispatcher he talked to was polite and responsive, so he was surprised when police hadn't arrived by 12:30 a.m., when he finally went to bed.

Tate didn't know whether Thomas' child was still alive when the officers who arrived at 1:24 a.m. knocked on the door.

Police returned at 2:42 a.m. after getting a call about a man walking, bloody and naked, down Gratiot with a knife. They took the knife from him and tried to decipher his ramblings about his dead son, said Police Sgt. Omar Feliciano.

Soon after, officers discovered young Raphael's mutilated body in a backyard on Clarion.

His father suffered from dozens of self-inflicted stab wounds and was taken to Detroit Receiving Hospital for medical treatment. Psychiatrists were evaluating him as well, Feliciano said.

Charges were pending Friday evening.

A smashed-out television, stereo and coffee table lay Friday on the front sidewalk and adjoining vacant lot of the Milner duplex, along with three empty cans of red spray paint, a fan, compact discs and religious books, including "Sing Praises to Jehovah" and "The Story of Jonah."

Police said Thomas used the spray paint to write "Last Days" on the sidewalk in front of his house. He also painted "Acts 17:24" on the sidewalk and on a white car parked a few houses down the street.

The Biblical verse reads: "The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands."

Previous trouble

- Other recent controversies involving the Detroit 911 system:
 - On Feb. 20, Robert Turner, then 5, called 911 after his mother collapsed in their Detroit home at 6 p.m. Police never came. He called again three hours later and was scolded by a dispatcher who accused him of playing a prank. His mother, 46-year-old Sherrill Turner, died of complications from an enlarged heart.
 - Jan. 12, 2005: Lorraine Hayes called 911 to report her husband had shot her in the head. She claims Detroit dispatchers ignored her pleas for help, one time asking her if she was a mental patient. She said she is permanently paralyzed from the shooting.
- Free Press staff*

Contact **AMBER HUNT** at 313-222-2708 or alhunt@freepress.com. Contact **BEN SCHMITT** at 313-223-4296 or bcschmitt@freepress.com.

Man arraigned for child abuse

Saturday, April 29, 2006

By Scott Hagen
shagen@citpat.com -- 768-4929

Prosecutors charged a 25-year-old Jackson man with child abuse Friday and await the condition of the 4-week-old girl -- who is not expected to live through today -- to file a count of murder.

David Monroe appeared by video for his arraignment in Jackson County District Court wearing orange jail fatigues too big for his rail-thin frame. With three television news cameras aimed at the screen, Monroe said little as Magistrate Fred Bishop read aloud the charge of first-degree child abuse.

Police said Friday the newborn was being kept on life support at C.S. Mott Children's Hospital in Ann Arbor but remained in critical condition. She is not expected to recover from the head trauma, police and prosecutors said.

"Our office charged him today with those things that we believe we have solid evidence to support," said Chief Assistant Mark Blumer. "Our investigation is continuing, and we are waiting for additional evidence from the hospital that we have every reason to believe will support a homicide charge."

The child's condition worsened Wednesday afternoon at Mott. Early that morning the baby's mother and Monroe brought the child, born March 29, to Foote Hospital and said the baby was struggling to breathe.

A police investigation began after doctors discovered injuries -- bruising on the front, back and mouth, and bleeding on the brain -- consistent with shaken-baby syndrome.

Monroe initially told police the child sustained the injuries while rolling in the crib at the mother's Porter Street apartment. Jackson police detectives Dean Schuette Jr. and Brett Stiles again questioned him later in the day.

He told police the baby was crying and he shook it until it stopped, police and prosecutors said.

The Citizen Patriot does not print the names of living children who are alleged victims of child abuse.

Police do not suspect the mother, 21, was involved.

Bishop set a \$250,000 bond for Monroe, who will appear for his preliminary examination May 9 before District Judge James Justin.

By then, murder charges may be filed against Monroe, possibly as early as Monday if the baby should die this weekend.

"These cases are very disturbing. We're talking about the most fragile members of our society," Blumer said.

"A number of the attorneys and secretaries on our staff have young children. The prosecutor and I both have very young grandchildren. And you can't deal with cases like this and not be affected."

A 1-month tragedy

Sunday, April 30, 2006

By Scott Hagen
shagen@citpat.com -- 768-4929

Her heart continued to beat and her lungs filled with air at each breath Saturday night as 4-week-old Jaylan Romer clung to life with help from a life-support machine.

The month-old baby from Jackson is unlikely to survive the bleeding on her brain, sustained allegedly from being shaken at her home. Doctors at C.S. Mott Children's Hospital in Ann Arbor declared Thursday morning that Jaylan cannot recover, according to police.

This means she will never learn to walk or talk. She won't set foot in kindergarten for her first day of school or experience her first kiss. She won't get the chance to grow old and make friends. And she will never know what happened to her.

It is a tragedy heightened by the circumstances that brought her to the hospital early Wednesday morning.

David Monroe, the mother's boyfriend, has already been charged with first-degree child abuse. He is expected to be charged with murder, should Jaylan die.

Police said Monroe told them he plucked the crying baby Wednesday morning from the crib that sits next to the third-story balcony of an apartment and shook her until she stopped.

"What we see is that the caregiver snaps on that particular day and shakes or slams the baby against something," said Dr. Stephen Cole, a forensic pathologist at Spectrum Health System in Grand Rapids.

Despite Monroe's apparent confession, residents in the townhouse and apartment neighborhood where Jaylan spent her short life wonder how it ended.

Each year, about 350 children in the country die of shaken baby syndrome.

"I don't see how either of them could have done this," said Ryan Marshall, 21, who lives down the hall from Tomi Romer, 21, the baby's mother. "You see them walking outside, being all cute with the kid."

According to friends, Monroe, 25, suffers from a brain condition himself and is uncertain how long he will live. He has three children of his own, including a 4-month-old girl born Jan. 2. He is reputed to love children and was often seen holding Jaylan with a smile on his face or playing with her 3-year-old sister, who is in foster care.

Neighbor Tara Bentley, 33, said Monroe was "an awesome guy" who wouldn't have harmed a hair on his children's heads.

Frustration is the top cause for shaken baby syndrome, experts say. A caregiver -- male in 65 percent to 90 percent of cases -- tries to stop a crying baby by vigorously shaking it. That causes the brain to bounce back and forth, leading to swelling, bruising and bleeding.

"It is obviously a very serious form of child abuse -- you have a defenseless infant," said William Newhouse, executive director of Lansing-based Prevent Child Abuse Michigan.

Severe brain damage and blindness often result -- if the baby survives.

Most of the 1,200 to 1,400 annual cases nationally occur in infants younger than 1 -- and 25 percent of them die.

Efforts to reach Romer and family members were unsuccessful.

A brief life

Little is known about Jaylan. Not much happens in the first four weeks of life. A baby is still too weak to lift its head, typically sleeps at least 12 hours and goes through about 12 diapers a day.

And it cries two to three hours a day.

What is known is how much the tragic situation has touched the neighborhood. Outside the apartment where Jaylan is said to have sustained her fatal injuries sat a little yellow teddy bear, a note rolled up and slid through its paws. On its foot was written the beginning words of a children's prayer: "Now I lay me down to sleep."

More teddy bears and tiny angel figurines adorned the entry sign to the Woodland Hills apartment complex off Porter Street. Hardened wax from a handful of candles carved a path down the side of the stoop.

Bentley taped to the wood a tiny, ill-printed black and white picture of a little girl in God's hands in an angel outfit -- "I just thought it fitting," she said.

As a mother of two, Bentley said what happened to Jaylan, "just makes me ill."

"Be safe in God's hands," she scrawled on the picture. "No one can hurt you now."

Fire victim, 11 months, identified; info sought

POLICE BLOTTER

FLINT

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Monday, May 01, 2006

By Kim Crawford

kcrawford@flintjournal.com • 810.766.6242

FLINT- An 11-month-old baby who died in an early morning fire Sunday on Flint's north side has been identified as Taliyah Wilson, Flint police said.

Police and firefighters were called to the house at 402 E. Ruth Ave. at 1:20 a.m. and found that the family members who lived at the house had gotten out of the building, but not the baby, fire officials said.

Arson investigator Sgt. Alan Edwards and homicide detective Sgt. Lee Ann Gaspar did not indicate in a statement released to the media that the fire was suspicious, but they asked anyone with information to call Flint police at (810) 237-6800 or Crime Stoppers at (800) 422-JAIL.

5/1/2006 11:00:00 AM

Sturgis man jailed on CSC charges

By Corky Emrick
Sturgis Journal Staff Writer

A 42-year-old Sherman Township man is being held on \$100,000 bond after being arrested Saturday morning at his home.

About 9 a.m., Sturgis Police arrested Steven Lynn Ruger. He was taken to the St. Joseph County Jail.

He faces one charge of first-degree criminal sexual conduct, two counts second-degree CSC and one count of fourth-degree CSC.

Police said the 13-year-old victim reported to school officials Friday that she had been victimized earlier in the week by Ruger, while under his care in the 900 block of North Lakeview Avenue.

School officials notified police, who then interviewed the child.

Police said the victim was taken to Sturgis Hospital, where she was treated and then released.

Police briefs

Monday, May 1, 2006

By Rex Hall Jr.

rhall@kalamazoogazette.com 388-7784

A 42-year-old Sherman Township man was arrested Saturday after an investigation by Sturgis police into allegations of criminal sexual conduct involving a 13-year-old girl, authorities said.

Sturgis detectives began looking into the case Friday after the teen told officials at her school the man had "victimized" her while she was in his care in the 900 block of North Lakeview Street in Sturgis, according to a news release.

The man, whose name was not released by police, was taken to the St. Joseph County Jail and is being held on \$100,000 bond. He faces charges of first-, second- and fourth-degree criminal sexual conduct.

Police said the teen was treated Friday at Sturgis Hospital and released.

April 29, 2006

Victims, speak up

Years ago, Oprah Winfrey announced she was sexually abused as a child. I thought, "She must be losing her audience and wants attention." Years later, I would face my own ignorance, when memories of my sexual abuse arose.

The average time for survivors to recall memories is 26 years. The legal system does not consider this, even though studies indicate that sexual abusers are unlikely to stop. There are no reports taken to record past abuse to provide current victims some correlation and possible action on present violations.

Because of this mentality that "it doesn't matter," past sexual abuse continues to remain a subject greeted by society with cynicism. There are young victims today who can't find the words for the monstrosities they live with. We must understand the necessity for standing up and saying "this happened to me and it does matter."

Kellie Clark
Jackson

Michigan Report

April 28, 2006

LAWMAKER PROVIDES PLAN FOR HEALTH CARE SAVINGS

Two bills that would allow people to open a bank account specifically to pay for long-term health care needs, as well as receive a tax credit for their savings, are now before the House.

HB 4790 and HB 4791 would allow the health care savings accounts to be used toward paying for health care coverage, including insurance premiums. Those accounts could be tax deductible up to \$5,000 per individual or \$10,000 per family.

With a large Baby Boomer population in the state, the legislation's sponsor, Rep. Kevin Green (R-Wyoming) said, "If we can offer residents the ability to establish a savings account that they can use to save for long-term care and incentives to purchase long-term care insurance, than we could see a lot of people starting to prepare for health care early and be more comfortable when they do reach that point in their lives."

Mr. Green estimated that while the tax deductions may cost the state \$1 million to \$6 million annually, mostly affecting the general fund, the savings alone to Medicaid should just 1 percent of residents start a savings account would be \$13.4 million annually, of which would be \$6 million in general fund dollars.

Clinic for uninsured opens within UM-Flint

FLINT

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Sunday, April 30, 2006

By Shantell M. Kirkendoll

skirkendoll@flintjournal.com • 810.766.6366

FLINT - The Urban Health and Wellness Center opened with fanfare Friday as University of Michigan-Flint faculty and students, politicians and health leaders trumpeted a new beginning in caring for the uninsured.

"As the last one to speak, I can keep the comments short and just say 'Yeah!'" said Linda Hamacher, executive director of Genesee Health Plan, a free health plan for low-income adults.

The health plan forged a partnership for its members to use the clinic, located on the university campus, for primary care and physical therapy.

"When it comes to caring for the uninsured, this community really steps up," said Hamacher, leader of the plan with 21,000 members.

The showplace clinic with floor-to-ceiling windows is located in the White Building, 509 Harrison St., near Saginaw Street and Longway Boulevard.

Beginning Monday, members of GHP can make appointments at the nurse-managed primary care clinic, but patients can expect something more, said UM-Flint faculty member and nurse practitioner Constance J. Creech.

"My hope is that beyond episodic and routine care visits, we can do health promotion and educate people on how to stay well," she said.

GHP covers doctor visits, prescriptions and some surgeries for those ages 19-64, with limited income and no other health insurance. In the first year, an estimated 2,000 members are expected to use the clinic, including students from Flint-area colleges.

A proclamation drafted by state Sen. Robert Emerson, D-Flint, and signed by the governor was presented to the UM-Flint Health Dean Augustine Agho.

Philanthropic and government funding helped open the clinic with support from the state Department of Community Health, Genesee County Board of Commissioners, Mott Foundation, Community Foundation of Greater Flint, Ruth Mott Foundation and state and federal legislators.

"Two of our signature investments have come together," said the Mott Foundation's Jack Litzenberg. "The urban center will increase access to health care and the health plan is a new experiment in providing care for the uninsured that ultimately will keep more people in our community."

QUICK TAKE

New venture in health care

□ **WHAT:**
Urban Health and Wellness Center, in the University of Michigan-Flint's White Building, will provide primary care and physical therapy.

□ **HOURS:**
Primary care:
Monday through Thursday, 9:30-4:30 p.m.
Physical therapy:
Monday through Thursday, 9:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

□ **DETAILS:**
(810) 424-5288.

□ **HOW TO SIGN UP:**
Genesee Health Plan enrollment is planned noon-6 p.m. Tuesday at the Cover the Uninsured Expo at First Presbyterian Church, 746 S. Saginaw St., Flint, or call (810) 232-7740.

Expanding health insurance to all

The Kalamazoo Gazette

Monday, May 1, 2006

Some 46 million Americans have no health insurance. About a million of them live in Michigan.

And that's just not healthy.

For many of the uninsured, it means going without health care. For others, it means being consumed by medical bills, debt and, for some, bankruptcy.

This week is Cover the Uninsured Week for advocates of widening access to health care for all Americans. They're lobbying Congress and state Legislatures and, in general, attempting to raise awareness of the problem.

Michigan residents are a little better off than the nation as a whole. According to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, in 2004, 11 percent of Michigan residents had no coverage, compared to 16 percent of all Americans. That is the result of Michigan's unionized auto industry, which has offered generous health insurance benefits to workers. But we all know that those generous health insurance benefits are eating some domestic automakers alive. And as jobs in Michigan's auto sector dry up, there are fewer people with health insurance.

Gov. Jennifer Granholm, in her State of the State speech, announced her Michigan FIRST health care plan, which is intended to make affordable health insurance available to a half-million workers not eligible for Medicaid but without employer-based health insurance.

We're eager to hear the details, especially how such a program would be funded in this cash-strapped state.

Locally, organizations like the Family Health Center and the First Presbyterian Church health clinic have provided low-cost health care for the uninsured.

But they are no substitute for a comprehensive health insurance program that leaves no American uninsured.

Death By Insurance

For lower-income working Americans, lack of health insurance is quickly becoming the new normal. That's the implication of survey results just released by the Commonwealth Fund, a nonpartisan organization that studies health care. The survey found that 41 percent of non-elderly American adults with incomes between \$20,000 and \$40,000 a year were without health insurance for all or part of 2005. That's up from 28 percent as recently as 2001.

Many of the uninsured reported spending their entire savings on health care and/or that they were having difficulty paying for basic necessities. And most uninsured adults reported cutting corners on medical care to save money — failing to fill prescriptions, skipping medications, going without preventive care.

Here's the other side of the same coin: health insurers' business is lagging, reports *The Wall Street Journal*, as "rising premiums and medical costs push more of their traditional-employer customers to shun or curtail company health benefits." And some investors are feeling the pain. Aetna's stock price fell sharply last week, on news that its "medical cost ratio" — a term I'll explain in a minute — rose from 77.9 to 79.4.

Taken together, these stories tell the tale of a health care system that's driving a growing number of Americans into financial ruin, and in many cases kills them through lack of basic care. (The Institute of Medicine, part of the National Academy of Sciences, estimates that lack of health insurance leads to 18,000 unnecessary American deaths — the equivalent of six 9/11's — each year.) Yet this system actually costs more to run than we would spend if we guaranteed health insurance to everyone.

How do we know this? The medical cost ratio is the percentage of insurance premiums paid out to doctors, hospitals and other health care providers. Investors are upset about Aetna's rising ratio, because it leaves less room for profit. But even after the rise in the cost ratio, Aetna spends less than 80 cents of each dollar in health insurance premiums on actually providing medical care. The other 20 cents go into profits, marketing and administrative expenses.

The New York Times

May 1, 2006

Other private insurers have similar ratios. And here's the thing: most of those 20 cents spent on things other than medical care are unnecessary. Older Americans are covered by Medicare, which doesn't spend large sums on marketing and doesn't devote a lot of resources to screening out people likely to have high medical bills. As a result, Medicare manages to spend about 98 percent of its funds on actual medical care.

What would happen if Medicare was expanded to cover everyone? You might think that the nation would spend more on health care, since this would mean covering 46 million Americans who are currently uninsured. But the uninsured already receive some medical care at public expense — for example, treatment in emergency rooms that would have

America's gratuitous health crisis.

been both cheaper and more effective if provided in doctors' offices.

And Medicare manages to spend much more of its funds on medicine, as opposed to other things, than private insurers. If you do the math, it becomes clear that covering everyone under Medicare would actually be significantly cheaper than our current system.

And this calculation doesn't even take into account the costs our fragmented system imposes on doctors and hospitals. Benjamin Brewer, a doctor who writes an online column for *The Wall Street Journal*, recently commented on the excess expenses he incurs trying to deal with 301 different private insurance plans. According to Dr. Brewer, he currently employs two full-time staff members for billing, and his two secretaries spend half their time collecting insurance information. "I suspect," he wrote, "I could go from four people in the paper chase to one with a single-payer system."

many pundits see red at the words "single-payer system." They think it means low-quality socialized medicine; they start telling horror stories — almost all of them false — about the problems of other countries' health care. Yet there's nothing foreign or exotic about the concept: Medicare is a single-payer system. It's not perfect, it could certainly be improved, but it works.

So here we are. Our current health care system is unraveling. Older Americans are already covered by a national health insurance system; extending that system to cover everyone would save money, reduce financial anxiety and save thousands of American lives every year. Why don't we just do it? □

Medicare deadline near

Saturday, April 29, 2006

By Susan J. Demas
sdemas@citpat.com -- 768-4927

Madeleine Haines is a computer-savvy grandmother of 14, e-mailing her family on Hotmail and reading the Washington Post online four times a week.

But when the 70-year-old Jackson retiree logged on to the Medicare Part D Web site last fall, she was fed up with the dozens of drug plans listed in dizzying text.

"I looked at this and said, 'This is ridiculous. I'm not going to sign up for this,' " Haines said.

Her \$200-per-month prescription drug bill was enough to change her mind. As the May 15 sign-up deadline loomed, Haines turned to the Jackson County Medicare/Medicaid Assistance Program that "helped me navigate the minefield," she said.

Monday, Haines settled on Humana Standard, which should save her about \$150 per month once she meets the \$250 deductible.

Many of the county's more than 20,000 seniors also are making the mad dash to sign up, though the exact number isn't known. As many as 400,000 Medicare recipients in Michigan still don't have prescription drug coverage, AARP reports.

"People have put it off mainly because it's so confusing -- and it hasn't gotten any clearer," said Lisa Rudolph, coordinator of the county Medicare/Medicaid Assistance Program.

Forty-eight U.S. senators are pushing to stretch Part D's deadline, but it seems unlikely.

Each morning, Rudolph's voice mailbox is jammed full, with employees taking three times as many calls since early April. She's urging people who can't get through to call the national hotline at (800) 633-4227.

Rudolph estimates the program has helped more than 700 Jackson County residents since Medicare Part D was first offered in November.

Seniors have to muddle through 41 plans from 18 insurance companies in Michigan.

"That's just overwhelming for anyone," Rudolph said.

The key is getting the list of seniors' medications, she said, and matching them up with the least expensive plan. The average call takes 20 to 30 minutes.

Rob Commet, owner of four local Commet-Welcome Pharmacies, said his employees have helped about 1,000 customers struggling with the program -- and the number grows every day.

The business offers its own prescription discount, but Commet urges customers to sign up for Medicare's plan because they'll see more savings.

Many seniors have called the county help line complaining that by signing up for Part D, they inadvertently changed their insurance plan or lost their discount from pharmaceutical companies.

Norma "Carlene" Johns, 77, almost lost her supplemental health coverage by choosing certain prescription plans.

"It was such a long, drawn-out process," the Napoleon grandmother said. "There was so much paperwork."

This week, she finally decided on Humana Standard for her and Humana Enhanced for her husband, David, 77.

Meantime, Michigan Sens. Debbie Stabenow and Carl Levin, both Democrats, are trying to ease seniors' pain by pushing to extend the enrollment deadline to Dec. 31.

Stabenow argues the benefit has created "chaos" for seniors, who should "have the time they need to choose a plan that works for them."

County and AARP officials aren't holding their breath. They are urging the state's 400,000 seniors without drug coverage to pick a plan or be slapped with a 1 percent penalty for each month after the May cutoff.

Despite the confusion, almost two-thirds of the state's 1.5 million Medicare recipients are on Part D, AARP reports, with 27 million seniors signing up nationally.

After they're on the plan, 78 percent of seniors are satisfied with it, reports AARP, which endorsed Part D.

"The bottom line is that many millions of people have prescription drug coverage who didn't have it before," said Andy Farmer, Michigan AARP associate director for health and support services. "But we don't think this is the end of the job."

About 500 hoof it to help the hungry

Sunday, April 30, 2006

By Greg Chandler
The Grand Rapids Press

HOLLAND -- Sara Van Doornik participated in her first CROP Walk in Ann Arbor more than 20 years ago.

Today, she recruits churches within the Holland Classis of the Reformed Church in America, encouraging them to participate in the annual hunger-relief walk in the Holland-Zeeland area.

Local churches have been the backbone of what is the most successful CROP Walk in the state, and one of the nation's largest

"It's not just the Reformed churches, it's the Catholic churches, it's the Methodist church, it's the Baptist church, it's the Christian Reformed Church," Van Doornik said Saturday as she prepared to take part in this year's Holland-Zeeland CROP Walk.

About 500 walkers took part in the 26th annual effort, which started and finished at Holland Christian High School. Many people brought food items that will be given to local agencies to replenish pantries.

Organizers hoped to raise at least \$100,000, continuing a streak that has lasted since the mid-1980s. Results won't be tallied until pledges are collected.

Walkers had their choice of two- or eight-mile treks. A two-mile "family walk" takes place at 2 p.m. today at Beechwood Reformed Church on Holland's north side.

Three-fourths of the funds goes to Church World Service, an ecumenical organization involved in emergency assistance and long-term hunger relief. CWS has assisted people affected by such disasters as the 2004 tsunami in southeast Asia, last year's earthquake in Pakistan and Hurricane Katrina on the Gulf Coast.

The other 25 percent of funds goes to local food banks to replenish their shelves.

Friends Roma Van Harn and Sheryl Veldhoff have participated since the first event in 1981. Van Harn, who has spent time in Mexico, says she walks to show solidarity for those who struggle to survive.

"They walk (for miles), just to get what they need," Van Harn said.

4/30/2006 11:00:00 AM

Hundreds help hungry in annual Crop Walk

By MARCIE WESTOVER
Journal staff writer

Around 200 people set out to raise funds for the hungry in the 35th annual Sturgis Area Crop Walk Sunday.

The rainy weather did not slow down Crop Walk Honorary Co-Chairman Woody Funk, 93, who lead the walkers out of the First Baptist Church on Fawn River Road.

Sturgis Police Sgt. Geoff Smith, also Crop Walk honorary co-chairman, kept back the traffic by leading the way for the walkers in his police car.

The Crop Walk was 3.7 miles long, with a half-way rest stop at The Salvation Army.

Bob Barnhart, associate director of Michigan Church World Service, came out to celebrate Sturgis' 35th consecutive year Crop Walk.

He said the 35 years of Crop Walk in Sturgis shows the "community has a big heart."

Barnhart said, "The Crop Walk focuses on helping the poorest of the poor."

The caring people of the community and good leaders are what makes the Crop Walk so successful in Sturgis, he said.

Barnhart said, "(The Crop Walk) not only meets the immediate needs of people, but it also helps lift them up out of poverty."

The Sturgis Area Crop Walk fundraising goal was \$15,000. The pledges are set to be in and tallied by the middle of May.

Walkers of all ages came out on Sunday, including a large group from Sturgis High School.

Ryan Davis, 17 said "I think (the Crop Walk) is a great way to raise money for people who really need it."

For 17-year-old Sorina Swartz, walking in the Crop Walk is usually a family tradition.

She said this year she is continuing the tradition by walking with friends.

"This is a great way to get involved and do something," Swartz said.

German exchange student Olivia Scholz participated in her first Crop Walk.

She noted the importance of walking to raise money for the cause.

There are around 150 Crop Walks in Michigan each year raising money to combat hunger in the local community and around the world.

Marcie Westover is a staff writer for the Journal. Contact her at westover@sturgisjournal.com.

Catholic Charities honors soup kitchen volunteers

HOMETOWN HEADLINES

FLINT

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Sunday, April 30, 2006

By George Jaksa

gjaksa@flintjournal.com • 810.766.6332

Catholic Charities of Shiawassee and Genesee Counties has honored volunteers at the Catholic Charities North End Soup Kitchen.

Awards were given at an annual appreciation dinner to Gloria Waite of Bristol United Methodist Women, Mundy Township; Daughters of Isabella, a Catholic women's organization; and Grand Traverse Pie Co. of Burton, owned by Cynthia Villaire, for donating pies to the soup kitchen.

Published April 29, 2006
[From the Lansing State Journal]

Girl power: Workshops build self-respect

Conference offers life coaching to 100 sixth-graders

By Nicole Geary
Lansing State Journal

Gardner Middle School girls got empowered Friday with self-defense moves, hairdo lessons and a free pair of shoes.

The all-day Girls Rock Our World Conference, held at the Radisson Hotel, was one piece in a pilot project between Lansing schools and the juvenile justice system.

State leaders have been looking for ways to better serve troubled girls, and they hope working with middle schools will be a preventative place to start.

On Friday, speakers urged about 100 sixth-grade girls to respect themselves, their friends and their futures in a variety of workshops. State and school officials plan to follow the participants' progress through upper grades to see how the experience affects them.

"I like the fact that we get to spend time with our friends and we don't have to worry about the boys," Mariah Arnold, 11, said of being at the conference.
"Maybe it's because we're special, and they just want us to realize that."

The number of girls entering the juvenile system has tripled in the past decade, said Sandi Metcalf, a consultant with the Department of Human Services, Bureau of Juvenile Justice.

"We haven't been programming for girls so we're losing the girls," she said.
"We're looking to see whether or not this is replicated."

The partnership with Gardner also included student surveys, a parent focus group and staff training.

Assistant Principal Ellen Beal said teachers learned more about today's serious issues, from self-mutilation to sexual encounters with older men, as well as the resources girls want.

Studying brain research on gender differences - the science behind common problems - also helps educators. "The boys can fight over a basketball and go over and be friends," Beal said. "If girls have a conflict, it can go on for months."

Contact Nicole Geary at 377-1066 or ngeary@lsj.com

Juvenile Home residents find `diversions' in book discussions

Monday, May 1, 2006

By James Sanford
jsanford@kalamazoogazette.com 388-8553

On a recent Monday afternoon, a group of young women gathered to talk about books. They sat around a table, talking and eating pizza.

The discussion took place in the basement of the Kalamazoo County Juvenile Home.

It's part of the juvenile home's Diversions program, in which residents read and analyze novels. On this day, Diversions organizers Kevin King, Tamika Frison, Marge Kars, Allison Baer and Lauren Freedman were introducing three books as potential candidates for discussion.

Kars, who manages Bronson Methodist Hospital's library, brought to the table Robert Cormier's "Tenderness." "It's creepy," she said, and the adjective sent a shudder of excitement around the circle.

King, head of teen services for the Kalamazoo Public Library, tried to drum up interest in "Who Am I Without Him?: Short Stories About Girls and the Boys in Their Lives" by Sharon Flake. The stories examine the struggles of young African-American women. King reads some of the titles: "Wanted: A Thug," "So I Ain't No Good Girl" and "I Know a Stupid Boy When I See One."

Freedman's book, Rita Williams-Garcia's "Every Time a Rainbow Dies," also deals with the difficulties of relationships, but the group is still buzzing about "Who Am I Without Him?" and, when the group members cast their votes, Flake's collection wins.

Unlike many book discussion groups, which may last for years, the participants in Diversions don't always stick around. "Teens might be (in the juvenile home) for four months or for four days," King said.

So Diversions is structured to allow kids to get something out of the experience, even if they aren't going to be around for very long.

"It's never been an overriding component that you have to attend four sessions (to appreciate it)," King said.

The program was launched in 2004 as an outgrowth of the Prime Time Family Reading Program, a series of family-oriented book discussions that the library sponsored at its Powell branch. Frison, the juvenile home's secure detention program manager, had

participated in that program and saw its effect on her young daughter, who began reading intently to prepare for the next discussion.

“I wanted something like that here for our kids,” Frison said, “something that might introduce the love of reading to kids who might have missed that.”

Frison got in touch with Susan Warner, head of the library's youth and branch services, and Warner brought King into the planning process.

The Kalamazoo Lawyers Auxiliary came through with money for supplies and books.

The organization was already sponsoring a juvenile home program called The Late Show (which Kars directs), in which volunteers from the community read short stories and chapters from novels to residents over the Juvenile Home's public address system.

“We began recognizing from the experiences of having The Late Show that the kids like the stories. Sometimes, they would come up and talk to the staff: ‘Is that story that was read last night in the library?’ (The Late Show) was encouraging kids to read. Some of these kids, I'm guessing, are coming from homes where there are not many books,” Kars said.

Diversions is designed to let young readers realize the power of words and stories. “The more you read, the better you read,” Kars said. “The more you read, the more you increase your vocabulary and you start asking questions.”

Diversions' members are “75-80 percent girls,” King said, although both boys and girls are encouraged to join. “More girls read than guys, statistically,” he said.

Last year James McBride, the author of the 2005 Reading Together book “The Color of Water,” met with the Diversions group. McBride, the son of a white mother and a black father, spoke about growing up bi-racial at a time when racially mixed families were rarely seen, and he talked about how he became both a novelist and a jazz musician.

“James McBride inspired them to do something other than being in a juvenile home,” King said. Frison agreed: “He also inspired them to be something other than an NBA player or a rap star.”

Inspiration is what Diversions is all about, particularly inspiring young people to change their attitudes toward reading for pleasure, which hasn't exactly been celebrated by teens in the past.

“The whole idea of reading in public has changed dramatically” among young people recently, King said. “I call it ‘the Harry Potter effect.’

“I'm pretty confident that a lot of (the Diversions readers) are going to continue to read (after they leave),” King said. “Even if they read on the sly, that's better than nothing.”

Motive a mystery in shooting of homeless men

GENESEE TOWNSHIP

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION
Monday, May 01, 2006

By Chad Swiatecki and Ken Palmer
JOURNAL STAFF WRITERS

GENESEE TWP. - Police said they are mystified about why a township man opened fire on three homeless men Saturday night before engaging several officers in a gunfight that took his life.

Township Detective Curt Scheidler said Anthony Williams had a previous run-in with two of the men he shot along N. Saginaw Street, but nothing very serious.

"We're still trying to figure that part out," Scheidler said today. "I wouldn't expect that he had too many problems with them. They were homeless. To my knowledge, they didn't come up to the Park Motel."

Williams, 47, who had lived at the motel for about a year, walked up to the men and started shooting, killing one of them and seriously injuring the other two.

He then fired numerous shots at the responding officers before a state trooper shot and killed him.

"He shot at almost everybody who responded to the scene at first," Scheidler said. "He wouldn't give up the gun and wouldn't stop firing, basically. We don't know what his problem was."

Brothers Michael Frye, 49, and Steven Frye, 44, were in stable condition at Hurley Medical Center. Police this morning were still trying to confirm the identity of the man who was killed.

The incident began around 7:30 p.m. Saturday on a stretch of N. Saginaw Street north of Coldwater Road near the Park Motel.

Neighborhood residents said the men allegedly shot by Williams were homeless but were longtime inhabitants of the area.

Neighbors said the men had taken to squatting in a fenced-in former refrigerated storage unit located behind an abandoned fast-food restaurant.

A mattress, pillows, blankets and other items littered the cramped unit Sunday.

Williams, who had lived in Wayne County in the past, had criminal records that ranged from felonies in the 1980s and 1990s to more recent minor offenses in the Flint area, state and local records show.

In the Detroit area, Williams was convicted of armed robbery in 1980 and attempted larceny and breaking and entering in the early 1990s; these records reflect that he never served more than about 2 1/2 years in prison.

Since then, court records show Williams was in and out of jail on misdemeanor offenses in 2002 on charges such as driving with a suspended license and giving false information to police.

Police puzzling over how rapist got into house

Saturday, April 29, 2006

By John Tunison
The Grand Rapids Press

HOLLAND -- Friends of an 83-year-old Holland woman who was raped in her home this week offered prayers for her as police continued searching for her attacker.

Pastors at Central Avenue Christian Reformed Church, where the victim is a long-time member, hope she will make a quick recovery.

"We're covering her with prayer and checking in on her a few times a day," The Rev. Chad Steenwyk said. "She has a strong family and lots of support."

The victim, assaulted by an intruder who entered her West 31st Street house about 12:50 a.m. Thursday, suffered bruising and was recovering at a daughter's home.

Police have devoted a host of resources to catching the attacker.

"We have pretty much every officer available working on the case," Holland police Capt. Rick Walters said.

Walters declined to detail what progress detectives had made. Police remained uncertain if the victim's door was locked because there were no signs of forced entry.

They planned to explore all options an intruder might have used to get inside, including whether he may have used a key.

Detectives hope the woman will be able to provide more details about her attacker in coming days. Police so far have a description of a man about 5-foot-7 with a thin build, 25 to 35 years old and wearing a hooded sweatshirt.

"As the investigation continues, I think there will be a lot of contact with her," Walters said. "We're doing our best to identify suspects."

The victim worked for Resthaven Patrons, a Holland group offering retirement housing and assisted-living services.

Steenwyk, the church pastor, said such a crime "rattles the community" and frightens residents.

"We have a fair number of elderly women in our congregation," he said. "This is a tough thing."

4C Child Care Advocacy awards go to 6 recipients

FLINT

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Saturday, April 29, 2006

By Bryn Mickle

bmickle@flintjournal.com • 810.766.6383

FLINT - Efforts to raise the bar for quality child care were honored at a special breakfast Friday morning.

The 4C Child Care Advocacy awards were given to six recipients, including:

- Marcy Collins, the family child care provider award for creating a "wonderful nurturing program" for children of working parents, said 4C Director Mary Ann Ketels.
- Karen Eaton, director of the UAW-GM Child Development Center, the Kay Huber child care advocacy award for community service.
- Regina Thomas, the Bernie Blamer child care advocacy award for education. Thomas, who works at Suncrest Child Care Center in Lapeer, uses senior citizens in her programs for children, said Ketels.

"It makes for a wonderful blend," said Ketels.

- Jane Ward of the Center Academy in Flint, the child care center provider award.

4C also gave awards for community/business child care advocacy to two local organizations:

- WJRT (Channel 12) was recognized for segments it has aired, including features that try to find matches for the Big Brothers Big Sisters program.
- Baker College of Flint was awarded for its "My First School" early learning center for preschoolers.

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Monday update: Donated home to give family of 9 a lift

Volunteer effort will aid children with disabilities

Lansing State Journal

MASON - The Wangers and seven of their adopted children will soon have a roomier, more accessible new home.

Arlene and Francis Wanger have raised 11 children over the past 46 years, many of whom have multiple disabilities.

And they've done it in an 84-year-old farmhouse with one bathroom and six tiny bedrooms.

In July, the Greater Lansing Home Builders Association will begin constructing a 1,768-square-foot home for the family next to the Wangers' current one.

"They thought of everything," said Arlene Wanger, 65. "Even a dishwasher - and we've never even had a dishwasher."

Wanger said she's looking forward to having two-and-a-half bathrooms, space in the garage for a wheelchair lift, larger bedrooms and overall handicap accessibility.

"It's going to be so much easier to move around," she said.

The new ranch home means that Arlene won't have to carry 15-year-old Hannah up and down the stairs any more.

"The Wangers are a very deserving family who need help, and it will be both a pleasure and a challenge to built the Wangers a brand-new home," Mark Voss, who is leading the effort, said in a news release.

To donate money or materials, call the home builders

association at 323-3254.

Lansing home fails inspection again

A Lansing District Court judge will decide the fate of a Blair Street homeowner whose house failed a second housing code inspection last week.

At a May 10 court hearing, city officials are expected to point out that although home-owner Jill Van-Giesen has made progress in addressing problems with the home's heating, plumbing, general maintenance and cleanliness, the house still is not fit for occupancy.

Jim McCue, the city's interim code compliance manager, described the house at 1608 Blair St. as 85 percent there.

Examples of what was left to be done as of the inspection last week include:

- Fixing the home's main sewage line
- Mending plaster
- Painting
- Final washing of walls and cupboards.

In mid-March, the two-story house was crammed with an estimated 20 tons of trash. It failed a sanitation inspection March 23.

At the hearing this month, a judge may impose a \$250 fine and force VanGiesen, 53, to pay the city to bring the property up to code.

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[From the Lansing State Journal]

Schneider: Keep state jobs in Michigan, readers say

Some reaction to my April 20 column about outsourced state jobs:

From Jo Flaherty of Lansing: "Not a week goes by without someone complaining about Wal-Mart and their China connection. We have choices there. We can choose to purchase those items or not.

"Unfortunately, state government would not take kindly to me not paying my taxes because I objected to my tax dollars being used to outsource state functions to a foreign country.

"With Michigan's high unemployment, soaring gas prices, and families barely making it from paycheck to paycheck, decisions made by our state leaders call into question their level of intelligence.

"... Our leaders have set a very poor example for keeping jobs in our state. Shame on them all."

It's everywhere

- From Kris Offutt of Mason: "Unfortunately, other companies do the same thing, outsourcing their technical-help calls to India.

"It took me days of constant calling and talking up to five hours a day to get a new hard drive for my computer, and I, too, dealt with people in India.

"Why can't these jobs go to people here in America - and Michigan?"

- From Richard Clement of Lansing: "This is an example of the phony 'We love America'

hype from the Engler administration and their friends.

"At least Gov. Granholm knows where her heart is when it comes to Michigan jobs."

- From Andrea Currier of Lansing: "I think it is a crying shame that the state contracted this call center out at all.

"I work in a call center for the state Office of Financial and Insurance Services here in downtown Lansing - a state job.

"The Human Services help- line workers should also be state employees.

"We should all call or write Gov. Granholm and let her know that we want the contracts to outside companies for state jobs to stop."

WAYNE COUNTY

Wayne Co. mental health board obligations disputed

May 1, 2006

BY ZACHARY GORCHOW
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

State officials are clarifying how much money they say the Detroit-Wayne County Community Mental Health Agency could lose, disputing the amount claimed by agency officials.

The administration of County Executive Robert Ficano denounced the figures cited by interim agency director Richard Visingardi and Bernard Kilpatrick, chairman of the agency's board, as inaccurate.

The administration also said the figures were a scare tactic designed to build public support to remove the agency from county control, and said the state's clarification only further proved its point.

Visingardi and Kilpatrick spoke at a Wednesday meeting of a task force studying whether the county should cede control of the agency in favor of an independent authority.

They said that the county could lose as much as \$228 million because it failed to spend state and federal money and, among other problems, improperly claimed expenses.

The figure startled task force members, who cited it as a reason for another authority.

A Department of Community Health spokesman basically backed Visingardi's figures on Wednesday, but a Community Health official said Friday the department is only aware of a potential \$38-million liability.

That figure could drop to \$8 million if the county can resolve some issues with the state over expenses it claimed, said Patrick Barrie, deputy director for mental health and substance abuse services at the state health department.

Visingardi also said the county could have to rebate between \$7 million and \$70 million in unspent funds over the last three fiscal years to the state, a range of figures that the county confirmed. Barrie said the state has not yet asked for those funds, pending the county's resolution of the lapses.

But Barrie said the state could neither confirm nor deny the remaining \$120 million, calling portions of it theoretical and saying other portions are not being sought by the state.

That means the potential loss of revenue, including the lapse, would be in the range of \$15 million to \$108 million.

Ficano administration officials say they expect to cut the liability to \$15 million.

Contact **ZACHARY GORCHOW** at 313-223-4536.

DETROIT

Low-income families to receive computers

May 1, 2006

House Speaker Craig DeRoche is set today to announce a new program that will provide computers-- and the training to use them--to 200 low-income families from a Detroit elementary school.

The program, called Advancing Beyond the Classroom, won't use state funds. But it will use \$10,000 in donated money to provide the families from Glazer Elementary School with refurbished computers.

"The education a child receives in high school is only enhanced by the preparation they get in the early grades. And technology is becoming important in that preparation," said Matt Resch, spokesman for DeRoche, R-Novi.

It's a pilot program for now. The plan is to expand the program to include families from other schools statewide, Resch said.

Among the partners making the project happen are Comcast Cable, TEKsystems and Focus: HOPE, which will be the training site.

Focus: HOPE selected Glazer Elementary School because it has an existing relationship with the school, located near the agency, said Kathy Moran, communications manager for the organization.

Training will begin for parents May 18. The parents will train the children.

By Lori Higgins

DN7/29/08 pg 4A

After 3 days, a jury is chosen for Unger's murder trial

By FRANK WITSIL
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

BELUAH — It took three days and a list of more than 300 people, but attorneys for Mark Unger and the state attorney general picked 12 people Friday to decide the fate of the Hun-

tington Woods man charged with killing his wife at a resort in Benzie County in 2003.

The jury, including three alternates, will begin hearing opening statements Wednesday.

Court officials said that the jury selection process had been

unusually complex, especially for Benzie County, just west of Grand Traverse, where Florence Unger died. The jury pool began with 350 people and was narrowed to 305 — to whom court officials sent a 14-page questionnaire.

Throughout the week, Un-

ger, 45, sat somberly in a coat and tie. He returned daily to the Benzie County Jail. His mother and sister also attended, as well as Harold and Claire Stern, the parents of Florence Unger.

Contact FRANK WITSIL at 248-351-3690 or fwitsil@freepress.com.

United Way refines mission Survey, studies aim to improve agency's service to community

Sunday, April 30, 2006

BY LIZ COBBS

Ann Arbor News Staff Reporter

The Washtenaw United Way's annual fundraising campaign is the county's single largest comprehensive effort to raise money for local needs. The organization funds 34 nonprofit agencies along with community affiliates in Dexter, Milan and Saline.

The United Way has been restructuring itself to better serve the growing needs in the local community. To help develop their long-term strategic planning goals, United Way officials sought input last year from more than 250 leaders from education, labor, corporations, government and nonprofit agencies, conducted focus groups, interviews and surveys.

Question: What's the impetus behind the changes at the United Way?

Answer:. You're looking at a system that started here in the 1970s, although the United Way as a system is over 100 years old. If you take a step backward, you would see that things are not the same now.

In my early days, the United Way system was about gathering people together for mass appeals to support a common pool of worthwhile nonprofit agencies. The United Way funding at that time was about 60 percent to 65 percent of a nonprofit agency's budget and the agency would also get government grants.

Then a change happened in the nonprofit world. There were a lot of scandals in nonprofit and for-profit organizations, so here comes a whole new set of laws. That, combined with the changing needs of people, made it necessary to change the way we do business.

It's not that the old system is broken, but it needs to change to meet the times and that's going to call for new skills and a different strategy.

Q. When did United Way leaders decide to change?

A. The board recognized a couple of years ago that there had to be a change. When I arrived (December 2004), the finance committee was working on new parameters. They wanted the United Way to be mission-focused, customer-

focused, results-focused and relationship-focused. We needed to make sure that when we sit down with a CEO, a mayor or a chamber of commerce, that they understand what the United Way stands for and why it's valuable.

Q. What does the United Way stand for?

A. Under our new long-range strategic plan, the United Way understands that it needs to assume a leadership role in the community that it long has held We also stand for collaborating and cooperating in solving problems with innovation and with others in our world. The third thing we stand for is strong workplace giving. In a world of complexity, giving in the workplace has never been easier. You can decide to designate your giving for all kinds of things, but the basic premise is you become a philanthropist. I always say that you can become a philanthropist for \$25 a year.

Q. The board's long-range planning includes a Community Needs Assessment project. What is that?

A. The Community Needs Assessment is an effort to create a comprehensive "picture" of the current socio-economic status of Washtenaw County. (The cost is \$64,017 and has been funded in part with local community support). The board hired Formative Evaluation Research Associates to pull together and analyze existing studies that have already been done, like the Blueprint on Homelessness, the Blueprint for Aging and a study on juvenile delinquency. Next, FERA surveyed community leaders online and from there, they basically need to put all of that information together then identify the gaps, or the "state of the community."

For the United Way to be relevant, we need to know what these new challenges are.

Q. What will the United Way do after finding out what the community needs are?

A. We could do nothing and continue to fund the way we are; we could put our emphasis on a single community issue, like hunger or homelessness, and fund that need higher; or we could look at a hybrid model that would involve programs of local agencies, community goals and the United Way's new initiatives (an information and referral service for health and human service agencies and an early childhood development project).

Our feeling is the hybrid model would best serve the community. We want to give the board a model and let them know what the impact would be if we did this.

Q. What are you expecting the impact would be with the hybrid model?

A. There are pros and cons to this. This would work great if we raised money and agencies wouldn't get less money. But, there's no way to guarantee that they won't get less money and that makes agencies nervous when you talk that way. The needs have grown in the community and we have to come up with some kind of system where funders put their money together to make an impact. ...

That's why the community needs assessment is crucial because we won't be making decisions on smoke and mirrors. We'll be making them on study and analysis.

Q. What other changes is the United Way making?

A. Our (annual) Day of Caring will have a real different look this year, but I don't want to talk about it because I don't want to spoil the surprise. We are doing so many new things that people will begin to understand that we are impacting people's lives, from birth to the later stages of life.

The bottom line is the values of the United Way have remained the same, but the method of investing for community impact needs to change. We have to find new and innovative ways to help the most people.